

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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SUBJECT: PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION: MONSIGNOR
CAPUCCI SPEAKS ON POSSIBLE RELATIONS BETWEEN
PLO AND GOV; PLO DEPUTY REP TO UN ALSO VISITS
CARACAS

1. MONSIGNOR HILARION CAPUCCI, THE BISHOP OF JERUSALEM
IMPRISONED SEVERAL YEARS AGO BY ISRAEL FOR GUN SMUGGLING,
GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE IN CARACAS MARCH 8. MONSIGNOR
CAPUCCI HAS BEEN IN CARACAS SINCE JANUARY, OSTENSIBLY
SENT BY THE VATICAN TO VISIT 50,000 GREEK CATHOLICS
LIVING IN VENEZUELA, MEXICO, ARGENTIA AND COLOMBIA.

2. IN PRESS STATEMENTS, MONSIGNOR CAPUCCI SAID THAT
PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ HAD PROMISED TO CONSIDER
ESTABLISHING FORMAL RELATIONS WITH THE PALESTINE LIBERATION
ORGANIZATION, NOTING THAT AS THE ONLY GENUINE REPRESENTA-
TIVE OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, THE PLO WOULD OPEN A
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DIPLOMATIC OFFICE IN CARACAS IF PRESIDENT PEREZ EXTENDED
OFFICIAL RECOGNITION. ON THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT,
MONSIGNOR CAPUCCI SAID THAT AS LONG AS THE USG GAVE
ANY SUPPORT TO ISRAEL IN ANY WAY, "THE U.S. WAS AS
MORALLY GUILTY AS ISRAEL OF BEING AN AGGRESSOR AND
EXPLOITER OF THE PALESTINIAN ARABAS." FURTHER, HE SAID
THAT THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT COULD BE SOLVED IN LARGE

PART IF ISRAELIS LIVING IN OCCUPIED TERRITORY WOULD LIVE
AS EQUALS WITH PALESTINIAN ARABAS.

3. HE NOTED THAT HE DID NOT DISAPPROVE OF PRESIDENT SADAT'S
PERSONAL DIMPLAMCY WITH ISRAEL, BUT CRITICIZED HIM FOR
LACK OF CONSULTATION WITH OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES. ON
LEBANON, MONSIGNOR CAPUCCI WAS LESS CLEAR IN HIS STATE-
MENTS ABOUT LEBANON AND ITS RELATIONSHWIP WITH PALESTINE,
SAYING "PALESTINE AND LEBANON ARE ONE BODY LIKE TWIN
BROTHERS," BUT ADDING LATER, "THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IS
THE ONLY REPRESENTATIVE OF THAT NATION".

4. HASSAN RAHMAN, INFORMATION DIRECTOR OF THE PLO IN
NEW YORK AND DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PLO TO THE UN,
ARRIVED IN CARACAS FOR SEVERAL WEEKS TO "MAKE POLITICAL
CONTACTS FOR THE ORGANIZATION" ACCORDING OT LOCAL PRESS.
IN PRESS STATEMENTS, HE INSISTED THAT THE PLO IS THE
LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FOUR MILLION PALESTINIANS
IN THE WORLD." HE ALSO CRITICIZED SADAT'S RECENT
PEACE INITIATIVE BECAUSE "IT IS NOT BEING UNDERTAKEN
WITH ARAB CONSENSUS ON PALESTINE, AND IT EXCLUDES THE
PLO." HE ALSO CLAIMED THAT SADAT'S EFFORTS ARE
ESSENTIALLY DIVISIVE AND DOOMED TO FAILURE BECAUSE OF
"ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE." RAHMAN NOTED THAT PALESTINIANS
HAD MADE TWO DEFINITE PROPOSALS FOR PEACE: (1) THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF A "DEMONCRATICE SECULAR STATE"; (2)
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THE CREATION OF AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE ON THE
WEST BANK AND THE GAZA STRIP. BOTH, HE SAID HAD BEEN
REJECTED BY ISRAEL.

5. COMMENT: DURING HIS RESIDENCE IN CARACAS, THIS IS
THE FIRST TIME MONSIGNOR CAPUCCI HAS PUBLICLY SPOKEN
FORTH AT LENGTH ON THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT AND THE PLO.
ON MARCH 7 MAJOR CARAKAS DAILIES CARRIED FULL-PAGE OF PHOTO
OF CAPUCCI AND CAPTION FROM ARAB COMMUNITY THANKING POPE PAUL VI
FOR THE VISIT OF MONSIGNOR CAPUCCI ANDDESCRIBING CAPUCCI AS "BISHOP
OF JERUSALEM IN EXILE, LOYAL SON OF PALESTINE, DEFENDER OF
LEBANESE INTEGRITY, LEADER OF ARAB UNITY AND PEACE."
THE METROPOLITAN CARACAS AREAS HAS AN ARAB IMMIGRANT
COMMUNITY OF ABOUT 75,000. IN ADDITION, A VENEZUELAN
CITIZEN OF ARAB EXTRACTION SERVES AS THE UNOFFICIAL
PLO LIASISON CHIEF FOR LATIN AMERICAN, HOWEVER, HIS
ACTIVITIES IN VENEZUELA HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY LIMITED.
SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE BY THE ARAB COMMUNITY
IN VENEZUELA HAS ALSO BEEN LOW KEYED. ALTHOUGH THE GOV
HAS HAD AGOOD DEAL OF PRESSURE FROM ITS ARAB OPEC
PARTNERS TO PERMIT ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OFFICIAL PLO
REPRESENTATIVE IN CARACAS, EMBASSY HAS NO REASON TO BELIEVE

THAT PEREZ WILL DO SO. DESPITE PRESSURE FROM OPEC COUNTRIES,
GOV FEARS CONSEQUENCE OF STRAINED RELATIONS WITH OTHER
COUNTRIES AND THE THREAT OF PLO TERRORISM EVEN MORE.
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